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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

NFAC 928-81
20 February 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment
National Intelligence Officer for Warning

FROM: Robert C. Ames
National Intelligence Officer for Near East and South Asia

SUBJECT: Monthly Warning Assessment: Near East and South Asia

1. Community representatives expressed interest in the increasingly numerous reports which suggest that Pakistan is planning to detonate a nuclear device within the next several months. This issue was also discussed by non-proliferation experts at their most recent meeting. Both groups -- operating from rather different levels of knowledgeability -- conclude that the latest spate of rumors are no more credible than previous "Islamic bomb" stories. Political analysts were unanimous in pointing out the serious ramifications of such a development however, particularly in view of the proclamation of Jihad against Israel at the just concluded Ta'if conference in Saudi Arabia. While there is little doubt that Pakistan is continuing in its attempt to match Indian capabilities to produce a functional nuclear explosive device, it is unlikely that such a device presently exists. (S)

2. Regarding the internal security situation in Syria, there was a consensus that recent developments have contributed to the gradual erosion of President Assad's position. Such developments include loss of three Syrian aircraft to the Israelis since late December; increased tension with Jordan; continuing heavy-handed repression of dissident groups inside Syria; and failure of Assad's personal diplomacy at Ta'if. Analysts agree that although Assad's position is still tenable, he is increasingly isolated from the mainstream of Arab decision-making. By taking harsh steps at home to suppress dissent he may be trading the future for the present. (S)

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